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## Investigation of the Relations Between Objectives of Turkish Primary School Curriculums and Multiculturalism

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the relations between objectives of Turkish primary school (1-8 grades) curriculums and multiculturalism. The research sample consists of 15 different lessons' curriculums which use in primary schools. The data was collected with documental analysis of qualitative analyses method and presented by using frequencies and percentages. Findings showed that relation rates between objectives of curriculums and multiculturalism are quite low. In the light of findings some recommendations presented for researchers, teachers and decision makers, who work in the curriculum development department in the Turkish Ministry of National Education.

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### 1. Introduction

In recent years, it has been seen that the multicultural education possesses a great amount in education. It is thought that transition from agricultural society to industrial society and knowledge society afterwards, immigrations and unions established among countries with financial, social goals have increased the value of the term. Societies are in transition from localness towards universality in this period. This transition period has made it an obligation to establish universal principles in education and to accelerate intercultural interaction (Cırık, 2008).

Multicultural education is policies and practices that show respect for cultural diversity through educational philosophy, staffing composition and hierarchy, instructional materials, curricula, and evaluation procedures (Frazier, 1977; Grant, 1977, as cited in Gay, 1994). Multicultural education is an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process. As an idea, multicultural education seeks to create equal educational opportunities for all students, including those from different racial, ethnic, and social-class groups. Multicultural education tries to create equal educational opportunities for all students by changing the total school environment so that it will reflect the diverse cultures and groups within society and within the nation's classrooms. Multicultural education is a process because its goals are ideals that teachers and administrators should constantly strive to achieve (Banks, Cookson, Gay, Hawley, Irvine, Nieto, Schofield, & Stephan, 2001). Within this theoretical framework, multicultural education should be in curriculums.

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Sleeter and Grant (1988) recommended that any curriculum that purports to be multi culturally focused should regularly present diverse perspectives, experiences, and contributions. These presentations would include materials that are free of stereotypes and present members of all cultures in a positive manner. In addition, teachers should provide as much emphasis on contemporary culture as on historical culture. Teachers must ensure the use of nonsexist language and allow equal educational access for all students. Students' experiential backgrounds, such as daily experiences, deserve to be considered as well (as cited in Herring & White, 1995). Multicultural curriculums should provide coordination between curriculum elements.

Banks et al. (2001), Bennet (2001), Gay (1994) defined essential principles of multicultural education as following: providing cultural pluralism, emphasizing social justice practices, giving place to different cultures in curriculums, ensuring social gender equality, providing educational equality for all students, understanding differences between people to enrich education, supporting all students to participate in hidden curriculums activities, learning about stereotyping and other related biases that have negative effects on racial and ethnic relations, providing opportunities for students from different racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups to interact socially under conditions designed to reduce fear and anxiety.

Within these essential principles of multicultural education framework, the aim of this study is to investigate the relations between objectives of Turkish primary school (1-8 grades) curriculums and multiculturalism.

## 2. Method

In this study, documental analysis of qualitative analyses method were used to investigate the relations between objectives of Turkish primary school (1-8 grades) curriculums and multiculturalism (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2004). From this perspective, eessential principles of multicultural education were considered in investigation process to evaluate the objectives. In this context, the research sample consists of 15 different lessons' curriculums which use in primary schools (MNE, 2012). The data was presented by using frequencies and percentages.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Results of the data gathered from documental analysis of curriculums are presented on the Table 1 below.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distributions for objectives of curriculums which related multiculturalism

Curriculums	Objectives related with multiculturalism		Total
	f	%	f
Turkish	30	2.38	1259
Mathematics	0	0	581
Life Information	84	28.76	292
Science and Technology	22	2.25	974
Social Sciences	85	48.57	175
Republic of Turkey Revolution History and Ataturk	34	42.50	80
English	0	0	50
Religion and Ethics	30	12.98	231
Visual Arts	8	4.18	191
Music	4	2.18	183
Play and Physical Activities	7	6.48	108
Physical Education	14	4.98	281
Technology and Design	0	0	63
Traffic Safety	0	0	24
Citizenship and Democracy Education	34	100	34
Total	352	7.77	4526

As it can be seen in Table 1, Mathematics curriculum has 581 objectives, English curriculum has 50 objectives, Technology and Design curriculum has 63 objectives, Traffic Safety curriculum has 24 objectives totally. However, none of these curriculums' objectives are related with multiculturalism.

As illustrated in Table 1, in the Turkish curriculum, there are 30 out of 1259 objectives (2.38%) are related with multiculturalism (e.g., share feelings and thoughts in group works). Science and Technology curriculum has 974 objectives totally. Its 22 objectives (2.25%) are related with multiculturalism (e.g., to understand visually or hearing impaired persons by putting yourself in their place). In the Visual Arts curriculum, there are 8 out of 191 objectives (4.18%) are related with multiculturalism (e.g., accept that art has a specific universal language). Music curriculum has 183 objectives totally. Its 4 objectives (2.18%) are related with multiculturalism (e.g., recognize the types of international music). In the Play and Physical Activities curriculum, there are 7 out of 108 objectives (6.48%) are related with multiculturalism (e.g., show understanding and tolerance towards differences in games and physical activities). Physical Education curriculum has 281 objectives totally. Its 14 objectives (4.98%) are related with multiculturalism (e.g., respect the rights of others in physical activities). It can be said that these relation rates are quite low for multicultural education.

On the other hand, Life Information curriculum has 292 objectives totally. Its 84 objectives (28.76%) are related with multiculturalism (e.g., accept that the differences with friends are natural). In the Social Sciences curriculum, there are 85 out of 175 objectives (48.57%) are related with multiculturalism (e.g., respect the feelings and thoughts of others). Republic of Turkey Revolution History and Atatürk curriculum has 80 objectives totally. Its 34 objectives (42.50%) are related with multiculturalism (e.g., recognize the basic principles of secularism). In the Religion and Ethics curriculum, there are 30 out of 231 objectives (12.98%) are related with multiculturalism (e.g., be tolerant towards different religions and beliefs). It can be thought that these relation rates are acceptable for multicultural education. As expected, Citizenship and Democracy Education curriculum has 34 objectives and all of them are related with multiculturalism (e.g., take responsibility to ensure social gender equality). As a result, all curriculums have 4526 objectives and 352 (7.7%) of them related with multiculturalism.

As Açıkalın (2010) stated that our curriculums should relate with multiculturalism. It is known that the attitudes of the students about cultural differences are affected positively by the curriculum in the multicultural education. For this reason it might be effective to form an understanding which is reflected to the whole of the curriculum, instead of designing different themes about multiculturalism in curriculum. Giving place to multicultural education in our curriculum will enrich the powerful structure of our country. To do this it is thought that making different kinds of ethnic structures, religious and cultures basing on developing reciprocal tolerance and empathy will be meaningful by the way of being a citizen of Turkish Republic (Cırık, 2008). The attitudes of the students about cultural differences are affected positively by the curriculum in the multicultural education. The curriculum is affected by the characteristics of students, teachers and society at the same time. The cooperative learning methods which are used in the learning environment helps to students' sharing goals and gaining equal statement. In addition to these, multicultural materials, vicarious experiences, role playing, and simulations can help students develop more positive racial attitudes and perceptions (Gay, 1994).

From these results it can be seen that relation rates between objectives and curriculums are quite low. Therefore, decision makers, who work in the curriculum development department in the Turkish Ministry of National Education, should revise these curriculums in the light of these results and multiculturalism principles. Also these results need to be supported with new investigations from the researchers.

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